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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED.

BY RICHARD LE GALLIENNE, H. W. BOYNTON AND OLIVIA
HOWARD DUNBAR.

MR. ALFRED NOYES'S POEMS.*

FINE poetry is by no means so rare to-day as some conventionally discouraging people would have it. Poetry is as much alive as ever it was, and the muses walk the earth just as of old for those who have eyes to see them. With the passing of any one generation of great poets, the cry has always gone up that poetry has died with it. So, strangely enough, thought Tennyson, when, as a boy, in his Lincolnshire garden, he heard of the death of Byron, little dreaming that, at his own death, the same cry would go up from a world that can only appreciate the poetry to which it has grown accustomed. Even Keats himself, but a few years before, had announced that glory and loveliness had passed away—at the very moment when he was about immortally to prove the contrary. So, however apparently bleak the contemporary prospect, we never know what sudden surprises of beauty are being prepared for us underground. We have had several such surprises within the last very few years. "There are no poets nowadays," said one old lady to another in a railway carriage in which I happened to be travelling on the morning of the death of Tennyson. As she spoke, I sat opposite to her reading Mr. William Watson's "Wordsworth's Grave." Mr. Kipling also was already vigorously abroad in the world. The fairy harp of Mr. Yeats had long been making its lovely music; and Mr. Stephen Phillips was standing on the threshold of his fame. It is strange that we should have so little faith in nature, not to be sure that what she has done once she can always do again.

* Poems. By Alfred Noyes, with an Introduction by Hamilton W. Mabie. New York: The Macmillan Co.

The poets I have mentioned are long since securely "arrived," and, in the mean time, while their fames were in the making, a young Oxford man, Mr. Alfred Noyes, was rowing in his college eight, and preparing still another surprise for those old ladies who say that there are no poets nowadays. Mr. Noyes, I understand, is only twenty-six years old, and has already published five volumes of verse: "The Loom of the Years," 1902; "The Flower of Old Japan," 1903; "Poems," 1904; "The Forest of Wild Thyme," 1905; and "Drake: an English Epic," 1906. The volume of "Poems" which has just been published in this country consists, I gather from Mr. Mabie's preface, partly of poems selected from those five volumes, and partly of original poems. So much of merely bibliographical details.

A new poet is perhaps always best "appreciated" by being allowed to speak for himself, rather than by eulogy; and I propose, so far as my space allows, to give the reader the opportunity of passing his own judgment on Mr. Noyes's poems instead of asking him to take mine—for I am sure that he will not need me to point out their spontaneous power and freshness, their imaginative vision, their lyrical magic.

Mr. Noyes is surprisingly various. I have seldom read one book, particularly by so young a writer, in which so many different things are done, and all done so well. There, one is bound to say, Mr. Noyes is refreshingly distinguished from some others among our younger poets. His book opens with a sumptuous ode on "The Passing of Summer," made of lines such as these:

"Tell us no more of Autumn, the slow gold
Of fruitage ripening in a world's decay,
The falling leaves, the moist, rich breath
Of woodlands crumbling through a gorgeous death
To glut the cancerous mould!
Give us the flash and scent of keen-edged May,
Where wastes that bear no harvest yield their bloom,
Rude crofts of flowering nettle, bents of yellow broom."

A few pages further on you find him celebrating a London barrel-organ, in fascinating jingles. Highwaymen, Napoleon at St. Helena, Old Japan, Heine, pirates, Celtic legends, deep musings on life and death—all are grist to the mill of the eagerly creative, sensitive mind of this young poet. But that for which one is most grateful to Mr. Noyes in his strong and brilliant treat-

ment of all his rich material is the gift by which, in my opinion, he stands alone among the younger poets of the day, his lyrical gift. He is a singer, with the power of haunting our hearts with musical rhythm and cadence. A lover of poetry was remarking to me, the other day, on the strange dearth of lyrical poetry at the present time. Well, in Mr. Noyes, we have a new lyric poet, whatever else he may be besides—and he is much. Take these lines out of “*Haunted in Old Japan*”:

*“All along the purple creek lit with silver foam,
Silent, silent voices, cry no more of home;
Soft beyond the cherry-trees o’er the dim lagoon
Dawns the crimson lantern of the large low moon.*

*“We that loved in April, we that turned away
Laughing, ere the wood-dove crooned across the May,
Watch the withered rose-leaves drift along the shore,
Wind among the roses, blow no more. . . .*

*“Lonely starry faces, wonderful and white,
Yearning with a cry across the dim sweet night,
All our dreams are blown adrift as flowers before a fan,
All our hearts are haunted in the heart of old Japan.”*

These, again, out of “*Pirates*”:

*“Come to me, you with the laughing face, in the night as I lie
Dreaming of days that are dead and of joys gone by;
Come to me, comrade, come through the slow-dropping rain,
Come from your grave in the darkness and let us be playmates again.”*

And once more this opening to the magnificent ballad of “*Silk o’ the Kine*,” to which I cannot pretend to do justice in so brief a quotation:

*“Heather-drowsy, heather-drowsy, lapped in the sunlight together
Eilidh and Isla lay one day in the golden summer weather.
For the silken sea of her golden hair and its billows of shadow and
shine
Had Sonch the Singer named her Eilidh—Silk o’ the Kine;
And the laughing lovers were cradled in clouds of purple and gold,
As round their couch in the heather it rippled and glistened and
rolled.
And the honey-sweet air was wild with the warble of birds and the
whisper of rills;
And the wind blew soft and sweet with the scent of the bloom of a
thousand hills;
And a myriad twinkling smiles awoke in the dreamy blue of the bay,
For, far and far above them, Eilidh and Isla lay;*

And her hand lay warm in his clasping hand; two young lovers were they;

Two young lovers were they."

One of the most striking and original poems in the book is called "Earth-Bound," and tells of two dead lovers who are tired of heaven and the infinite and long for their little earthly home again. Here are a few lines:

"We two, love, we should come
 Seeking a little refuge from the light
 Of the blinding, terrible star-sown Infinite,
 Seeking some sheltering roof, some four-walled home.

"So we should wander nigh
 Our mortal home, and see its little roof
 Keeping the deep eternal night aloof,
 And yielding us a refuge from the sky.

"We should steal in, once more,
 Under the cloudy lilac at the gate,
 Up the walled garden, then with hearts elate
 Forget the stars and close our cottage door."

When such poetry is being written, is it not rather stupid to say, like those old ladies, that there are no poets nowadays?

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.

THE AMERICAN CHARACTER.*

THESE books have, on the surface, at least, so much in common as to make it natural to take them up together. They deal alike with questions of American political and civic character. All of Mr. Wendell's chapters, and most of Mr. Lodge's, were originally delivered from the public platform. But the resemblance cannot really be carried very far, since one of the writers is a politician of a "practical" type, and the other an academic theorist. Some interesting comparisons, however, are suggested by these very differences in point and method of attack.

Mr. Wendell's addresses come to us by way of the Sorbonne and the Lowell Institute. Necessarily, we must expect from such a series of popular lectures not so much a fresh enunciation as a characteristic one. An effective public appearance of that sort

* "Liberty, Union and Democracy: The National Ideals of America."

By Barrett Wendell. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

"A Frontier Town, and Other Essays." By Henry Cabot Lodge. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.